

Lesson Plan: Analyzing Public Policy Options

Connection to POS: Topic 4 – Public Policy in Fairfax County

In this assignment, students conduct directed research of an issue of significance in Fairfax County and are provided with a framework for their work.



Objectives

At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- acquire information through directed research
- explain and analyze the effectiveness of a public policy proposal or decision



Materials

- Student Handout – Public Policy Research Guidelines



Time Needed

- This assignment would be appropriate for a quarter-length project.



Procedures

1. At the end of a unit on Fairfax County, students should be somewhat familiar with the structure, functions, and issues that characterize their county and its government. They should understand the availability of various county resources.
2. Brainstorm a list of issues with students and record the issues on the board. These issues should have emerged during the unit as crucial ones in the present day and near future in the county. Examples would likely include:
 - Highway congestion
 - Cable TV contract
 - Gangs/youth violence
 - Inadequate low-income housing
 - Firearms in public facilities
 - Overcrowded schools

3. Assign students to conduct independent research on policy proposals or decisions related to one of the issues. If only a few issues are identified, this may need to be a group project, or multiple students can work independently on the same issue.
4. Provide the students with the attached project guidelines.



Assessment

The guidelines offer you an ideal grading rubric for the final research project.



Extensions

1. Use the same research project design as a guideline for a similar assignment on policy making at the state or federal level.
2. Organize a point/counterpoint debate. At the conclusion, determine which students' minds were changed, and then assess why.
3. Students could write press releases for the school or community newspaper reporting on their findings.
4. Invite county officials or policy makers to present information on the issues to the class.